



# Heart to Heart

A Newsletter for Parents of Children with Disabilities

"...that their hearts may be encouraged..." Colossians 2:2

## A Voice for the Silent Ones

Erin Wilson is cofounder of the nonprofit [ifneedhelp.org](http://ifneedhelp.org) with her husband, Bruce. Their son, Jay, has severe autism and has gotten lost in the past. Creating If I Need Help has been a labor of love to protect him and others who have special needs.

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### My life isn't at all what I imagined it would be.

As a young person, I traveled, spending a lot of time in India and backpacking around Alaska. I figured I'd live in a cabin in the Rockies and spend much of my time hiking, hanging out in nature, and meditating. I even met my husband, Bruce, at a meditation center.

But the truth is, I barely ever have a quiet moment—and I never go hiking. At 46, my life isn't what I thought it would be. It's better.

Three years after our daughter, Grace, was born, I gave birth to our son, Jay. When Jay was about 2-and-a-half years old, Bruce and I started to suspect that something wasn't right. We thought he should be talking more. He interacted differently with toys—constantly holding them, but rarely playing with them.

When Grace was in kindergarten, we talked to a speech therapist at her school about Jay. After having him evaluated, we learned he was, indeed, delayed. When he was 3, we enrolled him in special education.

Jay started saying sentences, but that didn't last long. He had a major regression and lost all speech. He began running around the house screaming and engaging in other behaviors he'd never displayed before.

When Jay was diagnosed with autism, we were devastated and heartbroken. I wanted to hole up in a dark room and cry, but Bruce and I knew we had to pull it together and be advocates for our son. We consulted with a mother of an autistic child who told us step-by-step what to do to get help. We were able to get a significant amount of services for our son because we wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

We've worked hard to give Jay the best possible life, to keep him safe. That's why we were mortified in 2011 when Jay got lost at his school. Another mother found him alone on the grounds, just inside the

gate. She knew Jay and how to approach him. She was able to take him by the hand and escort him to the office. Another time he got lost at camp.

These frightening situations prompted us to found If I Need Help, a nonprofit organization aimed at keeping children and adults—especially those with special needs—safe in potentially dangerous situations.

When we came up with the idea for If I Need Help, Bruce and I were brainstorming; looking for ways to keep people like our son safe in emergency situations. It was then—when we were open and seeking—that this divine idea was able to land.

We created a variety of products—everything from patches to pins, clips to shoe tags—each with a special QR code. When the person is found, the code can be scanned by a smartphone or tablet, or their number can be entered on our website to access pertinent information in an emergency. These products can, quite literally, save lives.




Products available at [ifneedhelp.org](http://ifneedhelp.org).

### Reaching Others

A woman named Denise Carter shared a heart wrenching story on her Facebook page, "And Then They Grow Up." Denise was driving to McDonald's with her adult son, Matthew, who has Down syndrome, autism, and is nonverbal. A woman talking

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"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Matthew 10:29-31

on a cell phone ran a red light and hit Denise's car at 40 mph. Although Denise was incapacitated, she was alert enough to know that her son, while unhurt, wouldn't be able to communicate anything about himself, including his name.

Denise discovered our company after the accident and told her Facebook followers about our products. Her story, posted on our [ifneedhelp.org](http://ifneedhelp.org) website, went viral. In just a few days, we had more than a thousand orders and membership on our website quadrupled. I couldn't think about the magnitude of what was happening. I focused instead on being thankful—and on making our new customers feel special.

I've had a lot of sadness about my son's disability, but my faith has remained steadfast. Through our nonprofit, I believe we're serving a higher purpose—one I could never have imagined for myself.

### My Purpose in Life

At 13, our Jay is a big boy. He just started junior high. He finds joy in blowing bubbles. He loves to run and jump. He enjoys watching and caring for people. He likes to feed me.

But Jay also has a lot of anxiety. We drive around the canyons around our home in Santa Clarita, California, because it's one of his favorite pastimes. When he's escalating, I start to chant. While he's very low verbal, Jay comes into the chant. Before long, he's peaceful again.

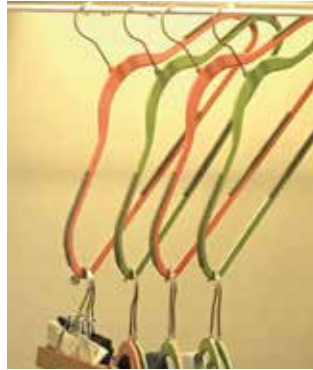
Sometimes when he's agitated, I'll have him sit on the couch, put his hands in his lap, close his eyes, and meditate. While he doesn't stay there long, it changes his entire demeanor. These kinds of experiences tell me he's a very spiritual young man.

I've always felt that at the end of my life, I'm going to say it was Jay who brought me to my purpose in life.



## Heart to Heart DIY

**E**asy Reach! Anything that can build independence is always what we're looking for in the Heart to Heart DIY section. Here's an easy and inexpensive idea to help modify a closet to make it easier for people to reach clothing at a lower level!



*As always, let us know if you have a DIY that works well for you so we can pass it along to others!*

*"He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things"*

Romans 8:23 (NIV)

**H**ow blessed are we that our Heavenly Father knows our needs, even before we know we need them?! **If I Need Help** ([ifineedhelp.org](http://ifineedhelp.org)) is an extremely practical and helpful tool for our loved ones who might not be able to communicate their needs to others in emergency situations, and I pray it will be a great resource for some of the families that read this. In addition to the practical ways we can respond in emergencies, we can have great peace in life knowing that the Lord is perfectly orchestrating all things for His purpose. We may not always receive what we need in the timing or ways that we expected, but He is always providing for us in the best ways possible. How can we not believe His perfect provision when He already provided in the best way—by giving His only Son to die on the cross and take away the punishment for all of mankind! How beautiful that Jesus rose from the grave and we can join Him in perfect peace and provision one day in heaven if we believe these truths.



## Support Groups

Contact us at **717.859.4777**  
or visit [hvmi.org](http://hvmi.org)  
for details.

Join other parents of "children" (of any age) with disabilities for fellowship, sharing, prayer and encouragement from God's Word at our **PIP** (Parents in Progress) Support Group meetings:

**South Jersey** —Collingswood, NJ

3rd Thursday, 7:30 PM (September-May)

(Bible Club program available during meeting time for children, teens and adults with a disability.)

**Lancaster County** —Akron, PA

2nd Monday, 7:30 PM (September-May)



## H\*VMI Upcoming Events—Save the Date!

**April 6**

Annual NJ Ministry Fundraising Banquet – Pittsgrove Township, NJ

**May 4**

Annual BASIS Breakfast (for bereaved parents)— Yoder's, New Holland, PA

**August 10**

BASIS Picnic – Akron, PA

**August 17**

All-Family Picnic (PIP/Bible Club/Handi\*Camp) – Roland Park, Akron, PA

**September 12**

Annual Charity Golf Outing – Tanglewood Manor Golf Course, Quarryville, PA

*Heart to Heart* is produced by **Parents In Progress** a ministry under the leadership of



### Parents In Progress

is a group designed just for parents of children with disabilities, offering resources to help them as they raise and nurture their children; and providing a "safe" environment of support and encouragement where they can freely discuss the issues unique to their families.

*"PIP is the one place I can truly express my frustrations because I know everyone there understands and cares."*

Please feel free to contact *Heart to Heart* regarding articles, resources, or information contained in this publication. We also welcome your thoughts, personal testimonies, articles, and resources that would be helpful or encouraging to other parents!

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